

ALIENATION AND THE PUERTO RICANS

Introduction

The concept of alienation was introduced in 1944 by Karl Marx in order to analyze the situation of workers in a capitalist enterprise. It refers to an objective situation in which the workers find themselves alienated from the product and the process of work, as well as from their own essence as human beings. However, objective alienation can lead to subjective alienation, something which people experience and feel and which involves the psychological state of the people.

I view alienation in a more comprehensive view in which the economic, political, and social, cultural and psychological systems interplay in such a manner as to result in a form of alienation that is exhibited in various forms at different times and places, with the element of dissatisfaction running through all the time. This view will hopefully shed some more light on the Puerto Rican experience as a people. I realize that limitations on the length of the report will force me to present the material somewhat sketchy. Hopefully, the readers will be interested in the topic and research further through the materials presented in the bibliography.

Conclusions

Basically, as things stand now in Puerto Rico and here, ^{in the United States} there appears to be very little support among the Puerto Ricans for a program that would bring about radical social change aimed at basic redistribution of wealth. Eventhough there are high rates of poverty, programs such as welfare and food stamps have effectively taken the edge out of the anger that would normally arise.

Maldonado Denis in writing about Oscar Lewis' La Vida and the people from the slums therein argues that "Restricted in their material and spiritual development, the poor from the slum is a being alienated from the greater society in which he lives, from the fellow beings with whom he lives, and from himself as a humanbeing...

The gravest thing is that... there does not exist any consciousness of that alienation. A vague recognition of the differences between the rich and the poor is all that can be discerned... the rest is (23) a false consciousness including frankly reactionary political attitudes."

Therefore the opposition to the existing order is not there because Puerto Ricans lack the fundamental basis of proletarian consciousness in a capitalist society; a sense of oppression ^{AN IDENTIFICATION} can be overcome ^{of the elite as the source of the oppression, and a belief that oppression} by collective action and class solidarity. Thus, I conclude that any change must begin at the grass root level with a transitional type of program and that selected area ^{migration} will be a step that will begin to address the needs of our people. Meanwhile the small number of organizations we have here must be improved and strengthened and new ones ^S developed.

ones developed.

Perhaps Helen Icken Safa has the answer for Puerto Rico.

"Independence is not enough for Puerto Rico. Independence must be linked to a socialist program which aims at ending the present system of inequality in Puerto Rico through a redistribution of wealth and power in the society. Such a program, which offers tangible benefits to the poor, may eventually win their support." (24)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Campos, Angel (ed.). Puerto Rican Curriculum Development Workshop: A Report, New York: Council on Social Work Education, Inc., 1974.
- Fitzpatrick, Joseph. Puerto Rican Americans, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971